

Interlude

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by [xpityx](#)

Summary

Tiny drabble, set between For Crown and Country and For Love and Liberty

It had been two months since he'd last seen Jack. Two months of paperwork, sermons, and tedious voyages barely worth the name. James had put him to the back of his mind as best he could: it was the only way he could fit back into the life he'd built for himself.

In his darker moments, James couldn't help but wonder how he'd ever know if something had happened to him. He'd awoken more than once from a nightmare of Jack face down in the Atlantic: his hair a black halo against the cold depths.

It was against this background of half-acknowledged worry that he returned home one evening to find Jack in his bed, curled up and sleeping peacefully. He took two steps forward and shook him awake with a hand on his shoulder.

"Where in the world have you been?" James demanded, whispering in deference to his housekeeper on the floor below them.

Jack blinked up at him, his cheekbones sunken and eyes vague.

"Had a bad time," he said, voice scratchy.

James sat down on the side of the bed and Jack curled around him. James automatically ran a hand over the tangled mess of his hair.

"Lost a man to the sea: jumped overboard and no-one strong enough to go after him," Jack said, like he was talking to himself. He wrapped a hand in the trailing edges of James' untucked shirt as he spoke. "Nearly lost Anamaria. Couldn't imagine wrapping her up in a bit of sailcloth and

pushing her over the side. Would've been like cutting off me leg and heaving it into the sea."

"Becalmed?" James asked, trying to make some sense of what Jack was telling him.

"Aye, for near two weeks. I don't suppose you missed me, eh?" Jack added with a hint of his usual slyness.

If Jack had pranced in teasing and drunk like he usually did James might've been able to say no. But this Jack—tired and aching—this Jack he had no defence against.

"Perhaps," he admitted. "What can I do?"

Jack looked up at that and smiled.

"Well, you can bring yerself a little closer for one."

James leant down and Jack met him halfway in a kiss that was unusually sweet. They made it to lying down, James trying to remove Jack's clothes and his own without breaking the kiss. When his housekeeper, Hannah, called up the stairs to bid him goodnight James nearly fell off the bed in an effort to get to the door to reply.

Once he was sure she was gone for the night he turned back to find Jack sat up in the bed and laughing at him. James felt a great well of emotion bubble up within him at the sight. It was always like this: he toiled day to day, falling into the moil of routine—lit only by the occasional evening with Elizabeth and Will. Then Jack would appear on his windowsill or in his cabin, and it was like breaking the surface of a great dark wave. He did not know if he was permitted to feel such a thing, let alone tell Jack of it, so he simply took the opportunity to lock the bedroom door and remove the rest of his clothes before returning to his lover's arms.

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